

Highlight

Issue 21, December 2010

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**Happy
Christmas!**

St. Edmund & St. Mary

12 December
09.45 Family Nativity Service

Christmas Eve
16.00 Crib service
17.30 Crib service
19.30 Nine Lessons/Carols
23.30 Midnight Communion

Christmas Day
09.45 Christmas Morning
Family Communion

26 December
08.00 BCP Holy Communion
09.45 Christmas Season
Communion

31 December 31
18.00 Churches Together
Service
19.15 Fireworks/Fairfield

AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY!

Isn't it tragic, Christmas has become a season to survive rather than enjoy. Depression and loneliness are often exacerbated by shattered family circumstances and increased debt. Christmas calendars are overloaded, causing us to think in terms of "getting through the holidays." What happened to the snowy white Christmas of childhood?

Christmas is being hijacked by secularists, exploited by capitalists, and trampled on by consumers. When we lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas, the season is profoundly devalued.

The true spirit of a Christmas needs to be re-established in our hearts and homes. All is not lost. The ultimate story of God's love is still true. His glory is still there to be found by those who seek. How then can we experience the true joy of Christmas?

The joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of reconciliation. Most of the issues that drive people apart prove to be petty and selfish. It's a tragedy that the Christmas celebration is often the backdrop for renewed acrimony, or the hurtful recall of past offences.

What joy we can know when, in the spirit of Christ, we exercise the same prerogative that God exercised in sending His only Son to the world; the prerogative of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christmas presents a reminder that the people we have left in the cold could find a warm heart if we were only willing to be more like the One we celebrate.

The joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of reconnection. Good news needs to be shared. Christmas should draw us together once again to consider world's greatest story. Jesus told a story about a woman who lost a valuable coin. She searched her house until it was found, and when that precious coin was restored to her she called all her neighbours and friends so that they could rejoice together. The implication is inescapable. The good news is a reason to gather those near and far to celebrate. Wonderfully,

joy can be found in reconnecting with those we love, and even with those we have lost touch with along life's journey.

Ingatestone Churches pray that you and your family have a blessed and joy-filled Christmas and that you may know the peace of Christ throughout 2011

The joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of rejoicing. Christ's birth was accompanied by angelic praise. Christmas presents an opportunity to seek to lighten our hearts from sadness and gloom. Hope brightens all that it touches. The Bethlehem manger is much, much more than a historic milestone; it is an unfolding promise to all who believe. Jesus is the Gift who keeps on giving. The Christian can rejoice in things eternal, even when our temporal circumstances are far from easy.

The joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of generosity. In John 3:16 we read: "For God so loved the world that He gave" While we should not be carried away with excessive debts and pride-driven spending, we should exercise generosity in deed and spirit as a genuine celebration of Jesus.

Unless we reinvest Christmas with its glorious message and meaning, the holiday will pass like any secular festival. Unless we truly celebrate Christ, the greatest story ever told will be lost amid the bells and baubles. Add another seat or two at your table. Forgive whatever grudges or hurts you would hold on to. Hear the story of Christ's birth once more with thanksgiving and awe. Wrap every present in love. You are the reason Jesus came. How wonderful!

May God bless you and your family
in the love of Christ.

Ian

(on behalf of Ingatestone Churches Together)

MOVING ON

The Revd. Sue Cruse has been appointed to the post of Vicar at Gosfield and Greenstead Green in the Halstead Team Ministry, Sue first came to Ingatestone and Fryerning parishes as an Ordinand in the final year of her training course seven years ago. Everyone was delighted when the opportunity arose for her to be able to stay as Curate to continue her training. Then together with her role as Chaplain to the ordination course that she had followed, she became Associate Minister with specific responsibilities in the parishes.

During all this time she has clearly grown and developed as a minister of God's church, and now takes on her new responsibility within the Halstead Team Ministry. She has been a valued colleague to the Rector, the Revd. Patrick Sherring and a friend. Everyone will miss Sue.

Her final services in the parishes will be on the morning of Sunday 30th January.

If you have been touched by Sue's ministry in any way, do please look to come and share with her at the services on that day.

NOT SUCH A HAPPY CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is meant to be a happy time but that's not the case for everyone. To take one example, expectations about family life can be raised to unrealistic levels and relationships suffer or break down completely. For some women and their children things have already gone wrong badly wrong even before the Christmas season arrives, which is why organisations like Chelmsford Women's Aid exist, to support women and children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence. This group works with them, encouraging them to develop skills, gain confidence and enabling them to exercise their own power and to use all available opportunities and choices to move successfully on in their lives.

Ingatestone United Reformed Church is committed to Christmas, as a reminder of the birth of Jesus and therefore as a time for fun and food, joy and celebration. We are also committed to being realistic about Christmas, acknowledging that

this is a time of special stress and strain for some in our society. That is why each year in one of our morning services we invite people to come along with Christmas toys and gifts which are then passed on to Chelmsford Women's Aid for their work with women and children. Your opportunity to contribute to this work comes at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday 5th December when the congregation meets for worship. Everyone is invited to come along, bringing toys and gifts and taking part in worship that helps us prepare ourselves for Christmas.

Helping children (and adults) learn about the Christmas story and how we can respond to it is the focus of worship at the URC two weeks later, at 10.30 a.m. on December 19th. In worship designed for all ages we explore the events that surrounded Jesus birth and ask what they say to us today. Worshippers that day include many from "UR Us", a group catering for the needs of parents and carers of pre-school age children in Ingatestone, meeting every Tuesday afternoon, from 1.30 p.m. to

SECOND SUNDAY LUNCH!

Where in Ingatestone could you get a two course Sunday lunch with chocolate & coffee for £3.00 (children £1)? The answer is at 1.15 pm on the second Sunday of each month at the Elim Church. This initiative has been running for over two years now and has proved very popular.

It is aimed at anyone who would benefit by having company. The meal is interleaved with a fun table quiz.

You are most welcome - simply 'phone 355382 a couple of days in advance.

3.00 p.m. Adults and children gather in the hall at the URC, to play together, chat together and enjoy a drink and snack in a safe and comfortable environment. Although some weeks the hall appears to be bursting at the seams the group remains open for others who wish to come along and join in. (For further details, talk to Sue on 352917.)

Later in the month everyone is also invited to the highly popular, "Carols by Candle Light" on Christmas Eve at 7.30 p.m. As part of the service a collection will be taken on behalf of *Shelter*. (Please note, as this is candle-lit only, you must bring a torch if you will need extra illumination to read the carol sheet!). Those who would like to come to church on Christmas day itself can do so at the URC at 10.00 a.m. when the Reformed and Elim Pentecostal congregations unite for a family service.

For further information on the work of Chelmsford Women's Aid go to

<http://www.chelmsfordwa.co.uk>

St. John's

19 December
18.00 Children's Carols
(Offering to Canning
Town Soup Kitchen)

Christmas Eve
18.00 First Mass of
Christmas
(esp. for families)
22.00 Solemn Night Mass

Christmas Day
09.00 Christmas Mass
of Nativity

St. Stephen's Day
11.00 Mass for Feast of
the Holy Family



United Reformed Church

19 December
10.30 All Age Worship)

Christmas Eve
19.30 Candlelit Carols

Christmas Day
10.00 Christmas Morning
Worship with Elim
at URC



THE LIGHTER SIDE

Anyone who believes that men are the equal of women has never seen a man trying to wrap a Christmas present.!

How do you know Santa has to be a man?

No woman is going to wear the same outfit year after year.

"Mum, can I please have a cat for Christmas". "No! You'll have turkey the same as the rest of us."

What goes: now you see me, now you don't; now you see me, now you don't?

Answer: A snowman on a zebra crossing!



GETTING IN THE PICTURE

Ingatstone's Victorian Evening has become the best attended event in the village's diary.

The High Street is closed to vehicles providing safety for the thousands of visitors enjoying everything that is good about Ingatstone. It certainly has caught the imagination! We are indebted to the committee that organises the event, the businesses that help fund it and everyone who embraces the spirit of the evening.

This year, Ingatstone Churches Together had a stable scene with one notable exception - there were no actors - no Mary, Joseph, shepherds, inn keeper ...! This provided the opportunity for people to dress up and 'get into the picture'. With permission, their photo was taken and uploaded to a website where it can be accessed and printed.

On the website there is information about our church services and other information about the true meaning of Christmas.

CHARITY CONCERT

On Saturday 11th December Elim is holding another Charity Concert at the Junior School in aid of a number of children's charities including Carol Moore's Children's Home in Andhra Pradesh in India.

Previous concerts were an outstanding success, raising more than £1,000. Without exception, everyone who commented said what a wonderful evening they had enjoyed. Last time, the music ranged from *Nessun Dorma* (Puccini) to *The Rose* (Bette Midler) sung by people who could grace a far greater platform than ours.

If you receive this news in time, please consider coming to what promises to be an outstanding evening.

For tickets (£6) please 'phone Brian Holmes on 01277 821205.

Elim Pentecostal Church

19 December

10.00 Family Celebration
Junior School
18.30 Carols by Candlelight
Elim Church

Christmas Day

10.00 Christmas Morning
Worship with URC

New Year's Eve

23.00 Prayer & Thanksgiving
for 2010/11
Elim Church

REFLECTIONS FROM ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST & ST. ERCONWALD

The motto of Blessed John Cardinal Newman was *heart speaks unto heart.*

It would be appropriate to describe the State Papal visit of Benedict XVI as a landmark for our Catholic community. You could argue even more so than John Paul II's visit 28 years earlier which was a Pastoral visit. Nevertheless I doubt whether the likes of St. Thomas More could have envisaged the double visitation of the Papacy within such a short period

You can read in the Sporting Pages - whether it be an account of a cricket match or a football game, some journalists will use the phrase 'They must have thought it was Christmas-or-'Christmas has come early.'

Invariably this highlights either some inept bowling or saw some

woeful defending (no teams mentioned!) But it goes to show that the word Christmas is still held and used as something good, something to look forward to i.e., Advent. The word itself means Christ's Mass - so it is the first mass to commemorate our Saviour in the form of baby Jesus.

Of course without the birth of Jesus, no Resurrection or Easter could have taken place. Years ago all the shops were shut over Easter and Christmas.

To quote Pope Benedict's words in Westminster City Hall to the assembled multitude of politicians etc..

'There are those who would advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere. There are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged in the questionable belief that it might somehow

offend those of other religions or none.'

'I would invite all of you, therefore within your respective spheres of influence to seek ways of promoting and encouraging dialogue between faith and reason at every level of national life.'

Regarding the above, at a local level we are so blessed to have the Ingatstone Churches Together for so many years now. As our Bishop Thomas quoted to us recently 'The walls that divide us don't reach to heaven.'

On a more parochial note, congratulations to Mgr. David Manson who celebrated his silver anniversary to the Priesthood at the end of July, highlighted by a mass at the Cathedral to a packed congregation including Lord Petre and Rev. Patrick and Rev. Sue.

With good wishes and blessings to you all for the coming year.

John McCormack
Pastoral Assistant.



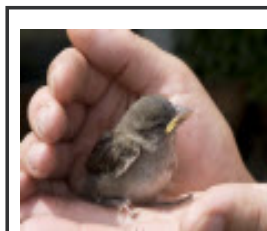
TOUCHING LIVES AT HOME AND ABROAD

In an amazing way God continues to open doors of opportunity to touch desperately needy people with the love of Christ.

Abroad, the projects radically impact lives; in Uganda we are involved in education and developing youth skills; in Romania we team with SMILES working alongside local agencies bringing help to the marginalised. We also support works in Congo and Botswana.

A team will be returning to India in October to support the work of Carmel Ministries in humanitarian projects for people with leprosy, those suffering with AIDS and orphans.

Carol Moore is patron of an Orphanage, each orphan is sponsored (£13 per month). The Home is also generously supported by Little Sparrows Nursery, Mountnessing Primary School and more recently Johnstone Primary School, Ingrave. Should you be interested in sponsorship or want to know more about being part of a team then please call 355382.



LADIES' BREAKFAST BAR

We meet twice monthly on the last Saturday of the month at 8.30 am in the Elim Church where we enjoy a wonderful Buffet Breakfast followed by an inspiring talk from a visiting speaker.

It is open to all ladies - why not join us and bring a friend? For tickets (£4.00)

'phone 355382.

*Saturdays 12 Dec, 25 Feb,
22 April, 24 June*

Little Sparrows Day Nursery

Monday to Friday
8:15 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.

www.littlesparrows.co.uk

St. Mary's Buttsbury

19 December
15.30 Family Crib Service
Christingle

Christmas Day
08.45 Holy Communion

26 December
15.30 Evensong

2nd January
15.00 Carols by Candlelight
With Shenfield Church Choir



CHURCH CHRISTMAS CARDS

Thanks to photographers Mark Cox and Lee Churchett we have again Christmas cards for sale produced on behalf of Ingatstone and Fryerning C. of E. Parish churches. There is a beautiful view of Fryerning church in the snow. There is view of the iconic Ingatstone church tower in the snow. We also have a radiantly colourful close up of the crib figures used in Ingatstone church. These are just £3.50 for packs of ten, with all profits going to the churches. They are for sale in Avrohurst, Dobbies, in the churches at times of worship and at the Christmas bazaars.



THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF THE CONGREGATIONS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN

A big thank you should go to the congregations of St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church, St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church Fryerning, and the children and parents of Ingatstone and Fryerning Church of England Junior School for their support of a number of charity collections since the summer.

Once again we all supported Harvest for the Hungry. This Essex based charity has been supporting Roman people in Bulgaria for over ten years with basic food aid and other items. This year over ninety boxes of aid were collected in our villages. This became part of over 3800 boxes sent by the charity.

The Shoe box appeal, organised through Operation Christmas Child, sends boxes of gifts col-

lected in shoe boxes for orphans and vulnerable children in eastern Europe, central Asia and Africa who would otherwise have no present at Christmas. We had another successful year collecting over fifty boxes through the two churches. At the C. Of E. Junior School we collected for Lepra, working to cure leprosy. Over £900 was collected.



In assembly over four rows of children stood up to demonstrate the number of people who would be cured thanks to the generosity of the school. In such an economic climate as we have at the moment, these are fantastic expressions of understanding the need to care for those who are more needy than ourselves.

St. Mary the Virgin Fryerning

17 December
09.30 Junior School
Christmas Service

19 December
18.00 Nine Lessons
and Carols

Christmas Eve
15.00 Crib Service

Christmas Day
08.00 BCP Communion
11.15 Carols and
Communion

26 December
11.15 Family Service
with Carols



St. John's: Fr. David Manson (353193)

URC: Revd Trevor Jamison (653707)

Ingatstone & Fryerning: Revd Patrick Sherring (352562) Elim: Pastor Ian Moore (355382)

Margaretting, Mountnessing, Buttsbury: Revd. Jean Halliday (354359)